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Member Development Panel - 17/03/14

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PANEL

Monday, 17th March, 2014

Present:- Councillor David Becket – in the Chair

Councillors Mrs Heames, Turner and Williams

Councillor Mrs Winfield (i-pad trialist) was also present.

1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none.

2. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Kearon, Miss Olszewski, Mrs Peers, Snell and White. A further apology was received from Councillor Eastwood (i-pad trialist)

3. **MINUTES OF A PREVIOUS MEETING**

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 29th January 2014 be approved as a correct record.

4. **VERBAL UPDATE ON TABLET TRIAL**

Members received an update from the ICT Operations and Development Manager on the implementation of the trial period for the use of i-pads by selected members.

It was indicated that 8 of the members nominated to participate in the trial, which had been extended to 6 months, had collected their devices after receiving training on 27 February covering e-mails, internet/intranet, Members web-site, web based Council applications and modern.gov.

Initial feedback from a number of the trialists was encouraging although a number of problems had been raised and were now being investigated by the officers. The main areas of concern early in the trial concerned were internet connectivity, keyboards and safe storage of the stylus issued with the i-pads.

Having regard to the expected savings of moving to i-pads by all members it was indicated that paper output from the Council's print room would continue to be monitored throughout the trial period. The refinement of training to Members and development of options for modern.gov would also be examined by the officers.

Resolved: That the update be received and the concerns expressed by the trialists be reviewed by the ICT Operations and Development Manager.

5. **ITEM FOR INFORMATION**

The Panel welcomed an announcement by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government outlining plans by the Government to legislate to allow councillors to be sent agendas for council meetings electronically.

Resolved: That the information be received.

6. NEW MEMBER INDUCTION AND MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2014 - 2018

Consideration was given to a report seeking approval of the programme for the New Members Induction Day that was due to be held on 28 May 2014. The Panel was also asked to approve Strategy for Elected Member Development.

Both documents were attached to the agenda as appendices.

The Panel welcomed the programme for the Induction Day but expressed the view that attendance by newly elected members should be made compulsory and policed by the respective Group Leaders.

Referring to the Strategy the Panel was advised that there was a facility within modern.gov enabling information about training received by Members to be stored and that such information was available to view by the public.

The Panel agreed that Members should be strongly encouraged to commit themselves to Personal Development Plans (pdi's) to underpin their role as elected members. The Panel expressed the view that responsibility for ensuring take up of pdi's should be the responsibility of Group Leaders and that this requirement should be included in the Strategy.

A discussion ensued around the creation of a skills matrix as suggested by Councillor Turner that Members could use to indicate individual training requirements. Information collated from Member responses would assist the officers in delivering the most relevant training ensuring that Members were better equipped to carry out their duties. In particular, training in Licensing and Planning was considered to be a priority along with scrutiny and IT training.

Resolved: (a) That the Programme for the New Members Induction Day be approved.

(b) That the Strategy for Elected Member Development be approved subject to the addition of a paragraph making it the responsibility of Group Leaders to ensure that their Members entered into Personal Development Plans by completing an audit of skills to identify appropriate training needs.

(c) That in connection with resolution (b) above, the relevance of current training to Members and how it is delivered be reviewed by the officers and, if appropriate, updated.

(d) That in respect of the production of the Annual Training Plan for 2014/15 this be compiled by the end of July this year to take account of the lateness of the European and local elections and by the end of June for the subsequent years to 2018.

7. VERBAL UPDATE ON STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL IT USAGE

Resolved: That in the absence of the Members Training and Development Officer this matter be included on the agenda for the next meeting if there was anything relevant to report.

8. VERBAL UPDATE ON IT TRAINING AT NEWCASTLE

It was indicated that arrangements were being made for information about the Council's e-mail system was to be sent out to Members by the end of March.

Resolved: That the information be received.

9. VERBAL UPDATE ON 'LICENSING ONLINE'

The Panel expressed the view that the new licensing web page required further work around its content and that the path to it from the Council's homepage needed to be made clearer. It was agreed that this matter be discussed at the next meeting to which an appropriate member of staff from Democratic Services should be asked to attend.

Arising out of the discussion on the above, the Panel took the opportunity to talk about the display of plans and photographs at the Planning Committee and the possibility of also using videos to further assist Members of that committee in determining planning applications. It was also suggested that photographs of sites the subject of planning applications should be placed on the planning applications web site along with other documents relating to each application.

Councillors Williams and Turner also expressed concern at the adequacy of the Council's loop system in connection with which it was suggested that DEAFvibe be asked to assess it and to suggest improvements if they were needed.

Resolved: (a) That the issues referred to above about the licensing and planning web-pages and use of enhanced IT at the Planning Committee be the subject of discussions at the next meeting of the Panel to which appropriate Democratic Services and Planning officers should be asked to attend.

(b) That consideration be given to inviting DEAFvibe to assess the adequacy of the Council's loop system as indicated above.

10. URGENT BUSINESS

There was none.

COUNCILLOR DAVID BECKET
Chair

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